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Abstract

As the use of workplace knowledge economies increases and emerging motivational-state variables such as employee engagement become more widely used, current frameworks of leadership are undergoing changes in perspective and practice. Moreover, while shifts in workplace dynamics have occurred in practice for some time, scholars are now calling for a new perspective of leadership. This article explores the connection between traditional and emerging leadership theories and the motivational-state variable of employee engagement, building toward a conceptual framework proposed for further refinement, discussion, and ultimately testing. A conceptual link between meeting and understanding employee needs, the use of emotional intelligence as a leadership competency, and transformational leadership is examined. Implications for leadership development in research and practice in an HRD context bring this article to a close.

Keywords

employee engagement, leadership, emotional intelligence, transformational leadership, transactional leadership, human resource development

Who are “the leaders we need”? They are the leaders motivated to achieve the common good who have the qualities required to gain willing followers in a

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particular culture, at a historical moment when leadership becomes essential to meet the challenges of that time and place.

Maccoby, 2007, p. xvii

The dynamics of work have changed. Many organizations are experiencing a dramatic shift from mechanistic models of work to more knowledge intensive communities of practice (Adler, 2001; Cho, Cho, & McLean, 2009); employees have higher expectations about participating in organizational decision making, pursuing dynamic involvement in organizational activities, and actively seeking work contexts where they believe they are treated with respect and fairness (Burke & Ng, 2006). As such, traditional models of hierarchical and legitimate power practices are being challenged as a new generation of workers enters into the workplace (Beck, 2003; Burke & Ng, 2006; Pink, 2001). While there is no one trend to generalize this new context of work, scholars agree that change is upon us.

Notwithstanding, community-based models of reflective trust and empowerment are becoming more commonplace inside organizational sociopolitical scaffolding (Alder, 2001); reflective of this movement, organizations are experiencing unprecedented transformation where old and new economies of organizational practice coexist, at times, within the same organizational systems (Banks & Nafukho, 2008; Joo & McLean, 2006). This model of coexistence requires innovative approaches to human resource development (HRD) practices and has direct implications for leaders at all levels (Burke & Ng, 2006). Consequently, the demands of leadership have evolved (Ardichvili & Manderscheid, 2008) and must be viewed from this new context: one that parallels the dynamics of the emerging workplace and that meets the challenges of this particular culture, in this historical moment, and in this time and place. The rules seem different now.

Once content with following leaders with positional power, workers (i.e., followers) are now asking who they should follow and why (Kellerman, 2008). The age of *leader as position* is quickly fading. Leading this new and evolving workforce requires new perspectives of leadership as well as new scaffolding for understanding the complexities of leadership development in an evolving landscape; one that maintains varying levels of identity simultaneously. As the dynamics of work continue to evolve, so must the ways in which both scholars and practitioners view leadership and its practice. Still further, some scholars suggest that traditional perspectives of leadership have reached expiration (Maccoby, 2007) and a new wave of leadership is being ushered in under the promise of renewed hope and inspiration in *how* work gets accomplished, not just *how much* (Shuck, Reio, & Rocco, 2011).

Notwithstanding, research suggests that followers are paying more attention to concepts such as meaningful work, authenticity, and social responsibility (Fairle, 2011; Northouse, 2010). Consequently, the leaders needed in this new landscape—those who will ultimately lead and create the organizations of tomorrow—must be prepared with new perspectives, visions, and models that equip them to meet the challenges of an evolving organizational landscape. Moreover, recent scholarship has called for a

developmental perspective of leadership; one that promotes employee success through creativity and innovation and that is grounded in the theoretical framework of HRD (Gilley, Shelton, & Gilley, 2011).

In response to this new challenge, some leaders are beginning to turn toward understanding their employee's level of engagement as a strategy for shaping the future of their organization. Employee engagement, defined as the process of positively motivating employees cognitively, emotionally, and behaviorally toward fulfilling organizational outcomes (Shuck & Wollard, 2010), has been touted to provide promise for maintaining and even improving competitive advantage across multiple levels of an organization (Christian, Garza, Slaughter, 2011); this type of competitive advantage is important in current competitive economic market conditions. Still further, research would suggest that leaders who are actively working toward fully engaging their workforce benefit by having higher levels of productivity, organizational citizenship behavior, and overall job performance (Christian et al., 2011; Rich, LePine, & Crawford, 2010; Shuck, Reio, et al., 2011). In short, the research seems clear: developing high levels of engaged employees provides significant organizational benefit in almost every conceivable organizational metric. Leaders who are engaging their followers are making a measurable difference in their workplace. More importantly however, within the emerging workplace context, engagement seems to be a promising strategy for working within the boundaries of the evolving new workplace.

Presently, however, employee engagement remains in a state of evolution. While some debate continues regarding the nomological validity of engagement (see, for example, Newman, Joseph, Sparkman, & Carpenter, 2011), recent research (Christian et al., 2011) has suggested that engagement is a unique construct inclusive of an employee's long-term emotional involvement and an antecedent to the development of important temporary states of employee sentiment in the workplace (e.g., satisfaction and commitment; Macey & Schneider, 2008). Different from satisfaction, commitment (Saks, 2006), and involvement (Macey & Schneider, 2008), engagement is grounded in an employee's unique experiences of work and represents the behavioral manifestation of a cognitive and emotional interpretation of work-related environmental inputs and outcomes (Shuck, Rocco, & Albornoz, 2011). Many know engagement by what people physically do (Kahn, 2010), yet often overlooked is the cognitive and emotive functions that provide stimulus toward behavior.

Nonetheless, while employee engagement has been recognized as a potential bright spot for short- and long-term business success (Ketter, 2008; Macey & Schneider, 2008; Robinson, Perryman, & Hayday, 2004), research has suggested that engagement levels among employees have steadily dropped since 2003 (Martin & Schmidt, 2010). Unfortunately, of the many people who leave for work everyday, millions arrive contemplating their level of disengagement for that day's work (Wagner & Harter, 2006). Disengagement is defined as the physical, mental, and emotional disconnection of employees from their immediate work roles (Wollard, 2011). Research suggests that disengagement in work roles is often related to the perception of poor workplace conditions such as less than meaningful work, feelings of nonsupport from managers and

leaders, or poor coworker relations (Fairle, 2011; Shuck, Rocco, et al., 2011; Wollard, 2011). Furthermore, some levels of disengagement may also be related to environmental and/or personal factors outside of one's work such as economic and financial downturns or significant life events. Notwithstanding, while disengagement seemingly maintains a firm grip on millions of working adults across the globe, organizations and those who lead them are beginning to respond.

For example, in recent studies, organizational leaders rated the development of employee engagement among the top priorities of their company for the coming year (The Ken Blanchard Companies [TKBC], 2008, 2011; Ketter, 2008). In 2008, 58% of 1,800 corporate managers and leaders agreed that "creating an engaged workforce" (TKBC, p. 3) was the top management challenge for their organization and 82% of the surveyed workforce said that employee engagement was one of the most important issues facing their company right now (Czarnowsky, 2008). In 2011, 1,300 executives and managers confirmed that creating an engaged workforce remained one of the top five management challenges in organizations today (TKBC, 2011). In light of the focus organizational leaders are giving to employee engagement, only 15% of surveyed employees felt that their organizational leadership teams had the skills to develop engagement among their current workforce and 85% of employees voiced a lack of confidence in their leader's ability to lead in the new emerging workplace (Czarnowsky, 2008). "The discrepancy between the perceived importance of engagement and the level of engagement that exists in organizations today" (Czarnowsky, 2008, p. 4) presents a serious gap for employees, employers, and the HRD professionals charged with the development of organizational initiatives around improving performance.

Problem Statement

Although many factors may affect the development of employee engagement, research suggests that leadership behavior has the potential to influence these factors to a great extent (Mester, Visser, Roodt, & Kellerman, 2003). Little, however, is known about how this influence occurs and what leadership behaviors might influence the development of employee engagement. As organizations begin paying more attention to the development of engagement as a strategic leverage point for performance, they often turn to HRD professionals for answers and implementation recommendations regarding practical strategies. Consequently, while research around employee engagement is emerging and several models suggest leadership as a crucial element in the development of employee engagement (see, for example, Christian et al., 2011; Macey & Schneider, 2008; Martin & Schmidt, 2010), there remains a gap in understanding what leadership behaviors could affect engagement-encouraging cultures as well as the processes around which leader behaviors bring about higher levels of engagement. Currently, very little research could be located that examined the relation, conceptual or empirical, specifically between leadership and employee engagement throughout the broader human resource literature base, and no article

could be located in any of the *Academy*-sponsored journals that included both the key phrases *leadership* and *employee engagement*. As a result, HRD professionals are often unable to locate needed resources to guide the creation, development, and ultimately execution of interventions that support and enhance organizational performance through formalized leadership development programs.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this article is to examine the conceptual relation between leadership behavior and the development of employee engagement, specifically in the workplace. Two questions guided the search for literature and resulting conceptual framework: (a) How might employee engagement and leadership be related? and (b) What framework can be developed from their potential relation? To answer these two questions, this article first examines conceptual frameworks for both employee engagement and leadership. Next, a conceptual framework of leadership in the context of employee engagement is examined. Last, implications for HRD are discussed.

Conceptual Framework

Due to their popularity, the frameworks for both employee engagement and leadership are understandably moving targets in states of growth and development; both employee engagement and leadership have burgeoning bases of literature. The following sections synthesize conceptual frameworks for both employee engagement and leadership as separate areas. First engagement is discussed, followed by leadership.

Employee Engagement

While still an evolving construct, several contemporary frameworks for engagement have been proposed for research (Shuck, 2011). Examples include the Saks (2006) multidimensional approach, the Maslach, Schaufeli, and Leiter (2001) burnout-antithesis framework, and the Harter, Schmidt, and Hayes (2002) engagement-satisfaction approach. While these frameworks offer unique and differing perspectives, a fourth framework, Kahn's (1990) needs-satisfying approach offers an interesting framework reflecting interpretations of the latent conditions within an employee's experience of work under the purview of a leader's influence. Thus, this framework (i.e., Kahn, 1990) draws from an HRD-specific context highlighting the unique, individual experiences of being engaged. While Kahn outlines three conditions preceding the development of behavioral engagement (i.e., meaningfulness, safety, and availability), research by Rich et al. (2010) suggests a more interconnected model of engagement that parallels the current definition of engagement (Shuck & Wollard, 2010). Rich and colleagues (2010) suggest that engagement is the active full performance of a person's cognitive, emotional, and physical energies. The intensity in which these energies are applied give context to a person's level of engagement, highlighting the motivational

dimension of the engagement construct. Below, the three dimensions of engagement—cognitive, emotional, and behavioral—are discussed.

Cognitive engagement. As a first step in the engagement process, cognitive engagement builds from an employee's interpretation of whether their work is meaningful, safe (physically, emotionally, and psychologically), and whether they have adequate resources (tangible and intangible) to complete their work (Kahn, 1990; Rich et al., 2010). This process, a kind of cognitive appraisal intention (Shuck & Rocco, 2011), places a value on a given situation grounded in the unique interpretations of that time and place. As such, the heart of cognitive engagement is the interpretation of the question, "does it matter?" (Kahn, 2010). For example, Kahn (2010) suggested that employees express themselves when they feel like they can "make a difference, change minds and directions, add value" or join with something larger than themselves (pp. 22-23). Reciprocally, Kahn suggested, "deaf ears make us mute" (2010, p. 23); that is, when employees feel that they cannot add value, make a difference, change minds, or are simply ignored, they choose not to speak up—they hold their voice, which is the ultimate act of nonengagement. Cognitively, the engagement process never begins.

Emotional engagement. Emotional engagement revolves around the investment and willingness of an employee to involve personal resources. This stems from the emotional bond created when employees, on a very personal level, have made the decision to cognitively engage and are willing to give of themselves and thus identify emotionally with a task at that moment. The giving of resources can involve tangible and intangible items such as time, care, mental abilities, extra work, pride, ownership, and belief, as well as others. As such, employees who are emotionally engaged with their organization have "a sense of belonging and identification that increases . . . involvement in the organization's activities" (Rhoades, Eisenberger, & Armeli, 2001, p. 825). At this engagement level, research might suggest that here is where employees become more productive, less physically absent, and less likely to turnover (Czarnowsky, 2008; Fleming & Asplund, 2007; Ketter, 2008; Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Meyer & Allen, 1997; Wagner & Harter, 2006), although engagement is not yet behaviorally manifested. From this framework, it is emotion that spurs action, built from a cognitive appraisal of the situation; but emotion does not equal action. As such, emotional engagement revolves around beliefs, which determine how behavioral engagement is formed, influenced, and directed outward.

Behavioral engagement. Behavioral engagement is the overt natural reaction to a positive cognitive appraisal (i.e., cognitive engagement) and a willingness to invest personal resources. Understood as the physical manifestation of cognitive and emotional engagement, behavioral engagement can be understood as what we actually *see* employees do. Engaged employees bring their full selves to work and allow "the full range of senses to inform their work" (Kahn, 2010, p. 21). Some researchers have linked what we see employees do to extra effort, in role performance, organizational citizenship behaviors, and intent to stay versus intent to turnover (Macey & Schneider, 2008). Discretionary effort, for example, is a multidimensional variable consisting of an employee's willingness to go above minimal job responsibilities (Christian et al.,

2011; Harter et al., 2002; Lloyd, 2008; Macey & Schneider, 2008; Maslach et al., 2001; Rich et al., 2010; Wagner & Harter, 2006). While many researchers may apply their own lens, what seems clear is that behavioral engagement is ultimately linked to increased performance (Christian et al., 2011).

Leadership

There is no doubt that *leadership* is a complex and multifaceted construct. The leadership construct reaches as far back as the recording of human history and includes all forms of leading. From the *Great Man Theories* (Stogdill, 1948) and early *Trait Theories* (Bass, 1990) to current models of *Authentic* (Avolio & Gardner, 2005) and *Spiritual Leadership* (Russell & Stone, 2002); “there are certainly many ways to finish the sentence ‘leadership is . . .’” (Northouse, 2010, p. 2). Pushing through the fog of leadership definitions, Bass (1990) suggested three dominant perspectives of leadership development that could be viewed as emergent categories encompassing a majority of the leadership perspectives to date: (a) leadership as a group process, (b) leadership as a personality perspective, and (c) leadership as an act or behavior. The first perspective, a group process, suggests that the leader is at the center of an activity. The second, leadership as a personality perspective, suggests that leadership is a group of characteristics or traits that a person must possess. Last, the third perspective, leadership as an act or behavior, suggests that leaders must do certain things that are within the realm of leading. Bass’s (1990) conceptualization of these three categories was meant to be inclusive but not completely exhaustive of all the leadership literature.

For the purpose of this article, Bass’s three perspectives of leadership have been combined into a single, unifying definition. Leadership is defined as “a process whereby an individual influences a group . . . to achieve a common goal” (Northouse, 2010, p. 3). From this perspective, leadership is understood as a *process* that takes place between leaders and those who follow them, not a set of traits or characteristics. This definition infers that leadership—as an influence process—is available to everyone, not a select chosen few: an important perspective of the emerging workplace with implication for employee engagement (Burke & Ng, 2006).

Aligned with the idea of leadership as a goal-oriented influence process, Burns (1978) suggested that leadership, as a practice, includes a dimension of positive influence with a higher purpose that transforms followers in a positive way (Maccoby, 2007). This “transformative” view of leadership is conceptually connected to Kahn’s (1990, 2010) perspective around the emergence of engagement within an employee. The leader creates the environment in which the conditions for engagement thrive, or diminish. Here, leadership and engagement share theoretical and conceptual parallels.

Thus combining a transformative leadership framework and Kahn’s (1990) employee engagement framework, we suggest that leadership is a process accessible to everyone, not a trait or characteristic reserved for a select few, with potential to transform followers in a positive way. We further propose that this is at the core of how

leadership in an engagement context might be conceptualized. While leadership in an employee engagement context can be conceptualized from the blending of definitions and merging of theoretical frameworks, no scaffolding for its development currently exists. Thus a new conceptual framework for employee engagement as an outcome of leadership behavior is a potential outcome.

However, prior to discussions about leadership and engagement, it seems essential to recognize that both leadership and engagement operate differently in various settings, systems, and/or contexts. In our experience, some situations call for leadership that is direct, blunt, or commanding (i.e., in a life or organizationally threatening situation) where other contexts call for a softer approach that is developmental, subtle, or emotionally sensitive (i.e., working with an upset employee). No one perspective of leadership is big enough for all contexts; no matter how you view or practice leadership, one can always find drawbacks and limitations to any one single perspective. We do not pretend to bridge this chasm.

Similarly, we recognize that developing high levels of employee engagement has both cost and benefit. While most research would suggest that high levels of employee engagement is a universally positive leverage point for organizations, being highly engaged at work is by definition an unbalanced state of being. For some, giving more at work could mean higher levels of productivity, performance, and promotion in the workplace (Rich et al., 2010; Shuck, Reio, et al., 2011); it could also mean having less to give at home with family and friends. Employee engagement has real consequences and outcomes and research is just beginning to explore this issue (Shuck & Reio, 2012).

Thus there are boundaries to explore around the areas of leadership and engagement, some of which seem beyond the scope of this article. However, because we examine the convergence of these two areas, it seems cautious to, at a minimum, present an alternative picture for consideration. For example, there may be times when high levels of engagement are not realistic or prudent and other times when it seems to be the right goal to set. While we present positive prevailing perspectives of both leadership and engagement as frameworks for discussion and future theory building, we also recognize that this could seem essentialist in nature or tone. This is not our intention, but rather a function of assumptions that must be discussed and explored openly around what leadership is and what engagement adds to, or takes away from, the conversation.

With this in mind, the following section presents an overview of leadership theory in the context of employee engagement. Implications for leadership development in HRD follow.

Leadership in the Context of Employee Engagement

Research has indicated that the qualities of transformational leadership result in outcomes, such as lower intention to turnover and higher productivity that are similar to those resulting from employee engagement (Macey & Schneider, 2008; Shuck,

Rocco, et al., 2011; Walumbwa & Hartnell, 2011). This suggests that transformational leadership might be an appropriate theory to conceptualize behavioral engagement, a result of cognitive and emotional engagement, in a leadership context. In the following section, a conceptual framework of leadership is explored through several existing frameworks using the lens of engagement. First, Herzberg's (1959) two-factor and Maslow's (1970) motivational theories are explored in relation to the structure of transactional leadership (Northouse, 2010) theory as a foundation for transformational leadership. Second, emotional intelligence is discussed as a skill set that bridges transactional leadership and transformational leadership behaviors. Finally, transformational leadership is discussed as an antecedent to employee engagement.

The Basic Building Blocks of Leadership

Leaders need skills to build a foundation on which they later stand. Herzberg's (1968) two-factor and Maslow's (1970) motivation theories combine to develop a framework for how leaders create foundations on which to build transformational skills. Herzberg's two-factor theory developed from the belief that one's relationship to work can influence overall success (Robbins & Judge, 2011).

Herzberg's (1959) theory proposed that extrinsic hygiene factors are conceptualized as employees' basic needs in the workplace. Examples of hygiene factors include perception of fair pay, reasonable working conditions, a reasonable degree of security, and levels of trust with the leader (Herzberg, 1959, 1968). Hygiene factors that are not satisfied (i.e., followers believe they are not being paid fairly, they do not believe they have reasonable working conditions, or they do not feel a reasonable degree of job security) cause an employee to experience dissatisfaction. If hygiene factors are met, dissatisfaction does not occur (Latham & Ernst, 2006). Sounds elementary, yet Herzberg (1968) suggested that dissatisfaction and satisfaction are not opposites, but rather extremes of separate continuance constructs experienced as different emotive states where a lack of dissatisfaction serves as a gateway for the state of satisfaction to begin occurring; thus not being dissatisfied leads to the ability to be satisfied, but does not necessarily assure it.

Herzberg (1968) suggested that intrinsic factors (i.e., perceived importance of contribution, personal growth, meaning, validation, respect, collaborative environments; Kahn, 2010)—essentially higher order needs—encourage employees to be more fully involved in their work; however, it should be cautioned that appropriate amounts of attention must be paid to extrinsic factors that result in no dissatisfaction. Grounded in theory, we propose that leaders must first attend to lower order hygiene needs before using intrinsic motivation factors to develop satisfaction. This idea directly parallels the structure of Maslow's (1970) motivation theory. Maslow (1970) provides a critical link between work motivation and human motivation needed for understanding the full scaffolding of employee engagement.

Maslow (1970) posited that all humans have basic needs for growth and development that must be satisfied. According to Maslow's (1970) theory, first a human's

needs are arranged in order of prepotency (Maslow, 1970). Second, the more foundational the need to survival, the sooner it appears within the hierarchy (Maslow, 1970). Third, needs are filled sequentially, starting from the lowest and moving to the highest (Maslow, 1970). Needs are individually identified as (a) physiological, (b) safety, (c) belonging and love, (d) esteem, and (d) self-actualization (Maslow, 1970). The importance of Maslow's theory as it relates to employee engagement and leadership is the principle that not fulfilling first-level needs precludes the rise to meeting second- or third-level needs (Shuck & Albornoz, 2008); this is analogous to Herzberg's contention that hygiene factors must be met before motivating factors. According to the application of Maslow's theory to this context, a leader does not necessarily do the work of meeting a follower's needs, rather a follower is motivated by their lowest level of unsatisfied need (i.e., this is the need that is prepotent). A leader can and should arrange environmental contingencies so that a follower's work leads to the meeting of these needs (Kahn, 2010) or can arrange environmental contingencies so that the worker is able to have these lower level needs met. Fulfilling employee needs in the context of leadership can be conceptualized through an understanding of transactional leadership theory (Bass, 1985).

Transactional Leadership Theory

Transactional leadership is defined as a set of behaviors that motivate and guide followers in the direction of a goal by providing clear expectations and providing resources for the completion of work (Harter et al., 2002; Robbins & Judge, 2009). Having clear expectations is more than providing employees a job description; it's an ongoing conversation. Of 10 million people surveyed worldwide, half indicated they had clear expectations of their role at work (Wagner & Harter, 2006). It seems prudent to then ask, "What are the other 5 million people doing everyday?" Leaders must ask themselves, "Do those whom I lead have an essential and well outlined set of responsibilities that move our organization forward?" (Wagner & Harter, 2006). "Do my people know what to do, what they do, and why they do it?" "Do they know how their work contributes to the success of our team and our organization?" "Is their work at all meaningful and connected to the larger organizational picture?"

Having clear expectations, however, is just the beginning. In addition to clear expectations, having resources to complete a job are equally as important. When a follower lacks the resources they need to do their job, resentment sets in and employees who had the potential to be a productive team player become frustrated and consequently, less productive. In addition to providing clear expectations, leaders at times must identify and provide followers the tools they need to follow through on their expectations. Having clear expectations and the resources to complete a task, followers develop a low level of trust based on consistency of leader behavior. At this level, an employee knows exactly what to expect from their work and their leader every day.

While transactional leadership is often characterized by theories such as contingent rewards and management by exception (Barling, Slater, & Kelloway, 2000; Northouse,

2010), it is the conceptualization of transactional leadership in this context that is essential to understanding how leadership affects the development of employee engagement. This conceptualization, that leaders must understand and meet their followers' needs, is directly parallel to Herzberg's (1959) and Maslow's (1970) motivational theories and explains why so many leaders never get beyond the basics; they simply provide no foundational reasons for a follower to move forward or be motivated. Much like pouring a solid concrete foundation for a new building, the foundational behaviors that have been discussed set the structural strength of a leader's ability to lead. As a transactional-type leader, followers would be provided with clearly defined expectations, resources to complete their work, and a burgeoning low level of trust, but no more; little relationship (i.e., outcomes of performance and satisfaction rather than superordinate goals such as in Path-Goal Theory), no personal development, and no emotion. Rather, leader and follower engage in workplace barter and trade revolving around task completion (Northouse, 2010). Operationally, we propose this is how transactional leadership might be perceived within a leader–employee relationship. Moving beyond the basics requires a leader to develop an additional set of skills. Great leaders know that leadership is not built on transactions alone, but on acknowledgment of the human spirit (Goleman, 1998; Maccoby, 2007; Seltzer & Bass, 1990).

Emotional Intelligence

For a leader to accurately diagnose which leadership behaviors align with a follower's needs and motivation processes, emotional intelligence skills are critical. Synthesizing the original work on emotional intelligence, Mayer, Caruso, and Salovey (2000) defined the concept of emotional intelligence as the ability to understand and express emotions within one's self, to use emotions to facilitate thinking, to recognize and reason with emotions, and to manage emotions within relationships to others.

Since its inception, the concept of emotional intelligence has simultaneously undergone both widespread scrutiny and acceptance. Several scholars suggest serious flaws with current emotional intelligence measurement tools (Locke, 2005; Van Rooy & Visweswaran, 2004; Waterhouse, 2006) including a lack of consistent psychometric properties within existing measures (Rosete & Ciarrochi, 2005). While the concept of emotional intelligence, like many other concepts currently undergoing developmental exploration, is not devoid of its flaws, its use as a guide for developing socially desired workplace behaviors linked to organizational performance has gained attention in the HRD community (Ayiro, 2010; Graham, 2010; Holt & Jones, 2005; Lincoln, 2010; Mayer & Salovey, 1997; Muyia, 2010; Muyia & Kacirek, 2010; Nafukho, 2010; Wienberger, 2010). For example, empirical evidence around the use of emotional intelligence as a strategy for improved work behavior (Aritzeta, Swailes, & Senior, 2007) and human interaction (Mayer & Salovey, 1997) has been suggested by researchers.

As a strategy for developing behaviors linked to organizational performance and the conceptual bridge between transactional and transformational leadership, emotional intelligence is conceptualized into four domains: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management (Goleman, 1998; Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2002). These domains are briefly discussed below.

Self-awareness. Self-awareness is defined as “the ability to recognize and understand . . . moods, emotions, and drives, as well as their effects on others” (Goleman, 1998, p. 88). Self-awareness is the bedrock of emotional intelligence and perhaps the most essential of the competencies (Cherniss & Goleman, 2006; Goleman et al., 2002). Some studies (Church, 1997; Church & Waclawski, 1998; Megerian & Sosik 1996; Shipper & Dillard, 1994) have indicated that a leader’s ability to succeed could be attributed solely to the domain of self-awareness, accounting for a significant portion of the variance in a leader’s success rate (Sosik & Megerian, 1999). For the leader, the essence of self-awareness is in having an accurate self-assessment of strengths and weaknesses and developing a sound sense of self-worth (Goleman et al., 2002). An accurate self-assessment allows a leader to be psychologically secure. Self-aware leaders keenly understand who they are and have an intuition developed from often-unobserved self-reflection. They make time to quietly think challenges over rather than act impulsively (Goleman et al., 2002). Self-reflection as a leadership behavior allows leaders to make decisions based on the context of the situation rather than a mechanical reaction. Leaders who lack this skill often isolate their followers because they lack the ability to understand themselves and, in consequence, their followers and surroundings (Goleman, 2000).

Self-management. From self-awareness comes self-management. If a leader cannot control their emotions, their emotions will control them. Self-management is defined as the “ability to control . . . emotions and act with honesty and integrity in reliable and adaptable ways” (Goleman, et al., 2002, p. 49). This competency involves using emotions appropriately to channel negative affect and impulses (Boyatzis, 1982; Goleman, 1998; Opengart, 2007). Research in this domain indicates that those leaders who are able to self-manage their emotions make better decisions and have improved interpersonal performance (Staw & Barsade, 1993). This is not to say that leaders cannot show negative emotion, rather leaders should show a range of emotions but at the appropriate time and for the appropriate reasons. Self-management is understood behaviorally by encouraging leaders to act with transparency and a sense of adaptability and achievement (Goleman et al., 2002). Transparency builds trust through an authentic openness to values, feelings, and actions by admitting mistakes and confronting behavior when no one else will (Goleman et al., 2002). Adaptability and achievement builds multitasking skills with a clear focus on high standards. Self-managing leaders are optimistic and seize opportunities for the best of intentions. When leaders low in self-management complain about the situation, leaders high in self-management are looking for a way to make it work.

Social awareness. Social awareness is defined as sensing the emotional tone of the organization and the emotional tone of the employees who make up the organization

(Goleman et al., 2002). Social awareness has been positively linked with a leader's quality of social interaction and perceived success in impression management (Lopes et al., 2004). Social awareness is being attuned to what is going on around the leader and making decisions in the context of the situation; this is often conceptualized behaviorally as empathy. Empathy is the ability to sense emotions in others and then grounded in emotional understanding, take action based on fear, concern, or joy (Goleman, 2000). Being aware of how a situation is affecting a follower, a leader can act in ways that calm and lessen fear or join in the fun, whichever may be appropriate at the time. Empathy can be misunderstood as adopting the moods of followers or as being inauthentic; empathy in this context "means taking employees' feelings into thoughtful consideration and then making decisions that work those feelings into the response" (Goleman et al., 2002, p. 50). Leaders high in social awareness understand the culture of the organization, build networks, and successfully navigate politics (Goleman, 2000).

Relationship management. Relationship management is the culmination of all three previous domains and is defined as successfully managing other people's emotions (Goleman et al., 2002). To do this, leaders must first know and be able to manage their own emotions and, second, be able to understand the emotions of their followers and the context in which those emotions occur. Relationship management has been conceptualized as friendliness with a purpose, a kind of persuasive collaboration among colleagues that moves the organization in the right direction (Goleman et al., 2002). Concepts such as vision, influence, and teamwork have all been mentioned as consequences of managing relationships built through social awareness.

Within these four domains of emotional intelligence, a significant conceptual relationship exists between Herzberg (1968) and Maslow's (1970) motivational theories as well as Kahn's (1990) conceptualization of employee engagement. Through the basic building blocks of leadership in an employee engagement context, a leader is able to meet lower order needs (Herzberg, 1959, 1968; Maslow, 1970) and then, only after attending to those needs can a leader move to higher order needs (i.e., intrinsic motivation factors) by using emotional intelligence. The use of emotional intelligence in this context is not conceptualized as a separate domain. Rather, it is a part of the leader's behavioral skill set, especially during the fragile time of meeting an employee's basic needs, when trust is just starting to develop. The use of emotional intelligence in this context is a seamless, authentic piece of the leader, not an act leaders use to get results while production numbers are low. Employees can sense an inauthentic leader and they often respond appropriately (Avolio & Gardner, 2005).

Goleman (1998, 2002) posited that leaders create the emotional climate of the workspace for followers and we agree. Followers desire positive feelings about their work experience (Shuck, Rocco, et al., 2011) and are resistant to constant cognitively dissonant feelings; a consequence of disengagement (Shuck & Wollard, 2008; Wollard, 2011). Goleman (2001) provided evidence that a leader can directly influence the emotional climate of the workspace, connecting emotional intelligence to leadership behavior. From this perspective, a leader is able to help meet the employee's belonging

and love and esteem needs and through the use of emotional intelligence, propel their leadership influence base to another level.

Finally, while scarcely discussed in the literature, evidence seems to point to emotional intelligence as the connection between transactional leadership and transformational leadership. When employees are engaged, they are emotionally connected to others and cognitively vigilant to the direction of the team (Harter et al, 2002); there seems to be an important connection beyond the basics. When engaged in their work, employees find meaning and excitement in the work they perform and go beyond role expectations and job descriptions, an antecedent of employee engagement. Great leaders connect emotionally with their followers. Transformational leadership builds on the conceptualization that has been developed up to this point and turns the corner on transactional behaviors through the integration of emotional intelligence as specific leadership behaviors that encourage the development of employee engagement via transformational leadership.

Transformational Leadership

As noted earlier, Burns (1978) suggested that leadership can be “transforming” rather than simply transactional by influencing the follower to focus on superordinate and higher level goals rather than simply a means-ends performance transaction. This framework of transactional and transformational leadership was extended by Bass (1985) and his colleagues (Bass & Avolio, 1997), and is the most widely used transformational model today (Antonakis, 2011; Bass & Riggio, 2006). The transformational portion of the model consists of four factors: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. Each of these four transformational leadership factors will be described below, in relation to employee engagement and previously discussed concepts that we see as critical for a model depicting leadership-engagement processes.

Idealized influence. The idealized influence component of transformational leadership is the personal charisma the leader possesses (as an attribute) and exhibits (in terms of behaviors), which elevates the emotional commitment of the followers (Antonakis, 2011). Transformational leaders exhibiting idealized influence inspire followers to espouse and focus on the leader’s vision and goals. According to Bass (1998), transformational leaders influence followers to focus on these goals by appealing to followers’ own higher order needs such as the need for achievement, power, or affiliation. Transformational leaders exhibiting idealized influence are seen by their followers as role models who epitomize the vision, goals, and values, which they espouse. These leaders communicate in such a way that encourages followers to form an emotional attachment and relational identification with them (Walumbwa & Hartnell, 2011).

The relational identification and focus on superordinate goals inspired by idealized influence is likely to increase all three components of a follower’s engagement in his or her work, including cognitive, emotional, and behavioral components. By serving

as a role model who lives by the goals and values he or she espouses, the transformational leader exhibiting idealized influence will help followers understand the underlying reasons for the goals and see firsthand the behaviors that lead to goal attainment. Likewise, the emotional arousal and attachment engendered by the leader exhibiting idealized influence will increase the emotional engagement followers feel in their work.

Inspirational motivation. Like the idealized influence component of transformational leadership, inspirational motivation leadership behaviors increase the follower's emotional commitment levels, but with a specific focus on goals. Leaders exhibiting inspirational motivation set challenging goals and express their confidence that their followers can achieve these goals (Bass, 1985). Leaders using inspirational motivation use emotional appeals, set ambitious goals, speak with emphasis, and unequivocally communicate their assurance that followers can achieve the ambitious goals (Antonakis, 2011).

While a great deal of research provides unequivocal evidence of the motivational and performance-enhancing effects of goal setting (Locke & Latham, 2002), recent research by Walumbwa and colleagues (2011) sheds light on the mechanisms by which the goal-setting involved in inspirational motivation leadership behaviors increases performance. In their study of 426 employees and their 75 immediate supervisors, transformational leadership behaviors were found to be related to increased follower relational identification with the leader, which was in turn related to followers' increased feelings of self-efficacy. Employees who relationally identified with their leader believed they could achieve ambitious goals. These findings have implications for the transformational leadership and employee engagement link, in that they suggest that the inspirational motivation component of transformational leadership increases employee engagement by increasing their feelings of self-efficacy in achieving challenging goals. A leader's inspirational motivation likely has the most effect on employees' emotional engagement by helping employees feel excitement (cognitive and emotional engagement) about the challenging goals and vision that the leader is communicating. In addition, a leader's inspirational motivation likely increases employees' cognitive and behavioral engagement levels by communicating and modeling the ways to achieve these challenging goals.

Intellectual stimulation. While idealized influence and inspirational motivation behaviors appeal to followers' emotional commitment levels, the intellectual stimulation component of transformational leadership appeals to followers' rational outlook on their work goals, tasks, and problems. With intellectual stimulation, the transformational leader enhances the follower's "conceptualization, comprehension, and discernment of the nature of the problems they face, and their solutions" (Bass, 1985, p. 99). The leader does this by fostering an environment of rational thought, investigation, creativity, and innovation to help followers find novel ways of achieving challenging work goals and solving challenging work problems.

In terms of employee engagement, the intellectual stimulation component of transformational leadership likely appeals primarily to the cognitive component

of employees' engagement levels by helping them understand and see available and innovative avenues for achieving their goals. Support for this suggestion can be found in a recent study by Jiao, Richards, and Zhang (2011), which suggested that transformational leadership behaviors increase followers' motivational perceptions of goal instrumentalities, which increase their organizational citizenship behaviors. These findings suggest that intellectual stimulation behaviors help employees see the means to goal achievement, and thus increase their perceptions that if they put forth effort they can achieve goals that are meaningful to them. In addition to increasing employees' cognitive engagement, these clarified motivational linkages can also serve to increase employees' emotional and behavioral engagement levels as they help employees experience and find value in the success of goal achievement.

Individualized consideration. The fourth component of transformational leadership, individualized consideration, includes behaviors where the leader builds a personal relationship with the follower by getting to know the followers' needs, goals, and interests and responding accordingly. Bass (1985) describes the transformational leader who exhibits individualized consideration behaviors as providing "individualized attention and a developmental or mentoring orientation" toward his or her followers (p. 83). The leader exhibiting individualized consideration coaches and mentors followers to help them continuously develop and achieve their potential.

The individualized consideration dimension of transformational leadership would seem to be particularly important in fostering emotional, cognitive, and behavioral engagement in followers. Individualized consideration behaviors help the leader and follower build a unique and positive relationship, and help the follower relationally identify with the leader and his or her goals. Relational identification with the leader who exhibits more transformational leadership behaviors has been shown to be related to increased self-efficacy and performance (Walumbwa & Hartnell, 2011). Research has also shown that transformational leadership engenders higher leader-member exchange quality, which is related to increased follower performance and effort (Wang, Law, Hackett, Wang, & Chen, 2005). Employees with a positive relationship with their supervisor, who mentors, encourages, and coaches them to continuously develop to achieve their full potential, are likely to be more emotionally, cognitively, and behaviorally engaged in their work.

Overall, we have argued that transformational leadership, using the four components of idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration, potentially foster increased engagement at all levels. While minimal empirical research has been conducted to investigate how transformational leadership may promote employee engagement, there is some basis to support the basic relationship (Tims, Bakker, & Zanthopoulou, 2011).

Conceptual Model

A link has been drawn between the conceptual underpinnings of transformational leadership and employee engagement. The links between employee needs and

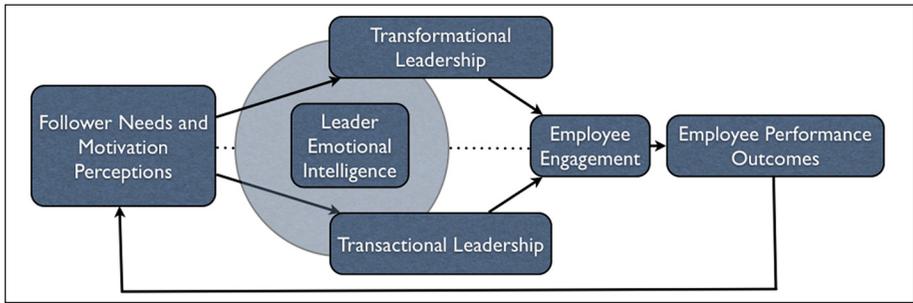


Figure.1 Conceptual model of leadership and employee engagement

motivation, leader emotional intelligence, basic transactional leadership behavior, and transformational leadership behavior show a process model with implications for how employee engagement in a leadership context could be conceptualized within the field of HRD. See Figure 1.

As shown in Figure 1, the beginning building block in the conceptual model, and the focus of leadership, is the follower's need levels and expectancy perceptions. Here the employee responds to the environment based on his or her level of need (e.g., hygiene or intrinsic) and how they perceive the potential outcomes of their work efforts. Next, emotional intelligence skills are used to understand the motivational outcomes on which the follower is focused; leaders use emotional intelligence skills to connect with employees and employees use their perception of a leader's emotional intelligence skills to make decisions about what kind of leader they are working with and to decipher the climate within their workplace. Here, a follower might ask, "should I just do what I am told, or is it safe to raise my hand?" Leaders create and reinforce climate-based norms by their actions. To fully represent its influence, we have placed a circle around the label of emotional intelligence to represent the wide range of behaviors that a leader might exhibit as well as the range of effect such behaviors might have within the context of leadership.

Next, the leader either exhibits appropriate levels of transactional leadership to clarify expectations and meet lower level needs or transformational leadership, in the form of idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration, to heighten the follower's focus on higher level outcomes and a shared vision for superordinate goals. No matter the style, we suggest leaders must meet lower level needs to be classified as leading at all; while not explicitly labeled as such, this is assumed to be occurring within both transactional and transformational styles. The basic difference in our model is that transactional leadership stops after lower level needs are identified, whereas transformational leadership moves to another level. Both styles of leadership have an effect on employee engagement levels.

The heightened awareness of upper level outcomes within the transformational context, along with increased confidence in how to achieve these outcomes, leads to

greater cognitive, emotional, and behavioral components of engagement on the part of the follower. Thus, the conceptualization of domains associated with transformational leadership seem to be an antecedent to the employee engagement construct (Macey & Schneider, 2008). The follower's achievement of these outcomes in turn affects their motivation levels, and the cycle continues as depicted by the cyclical nature of our model.

As a final note, we propose that followers would exhibit some levels of engagement with transactional leaders, but to a lesser extent than with a transformational leader. In addition, some employees by nature may be engaged on their own without any leadership direction at all (Kerr & Jermier, 1978); this is represented in our model by the dotted line between follower needs and motivation perceptions and employee engagement. Under this premise, leadership may serve as a mediator or moderator variable in the follower motivation and employee engagement relationship; this, however, remains open for empirical examination.

Conclusions and Implications for Leadership Development in HRD

A conceptual relationship has been drawn between leadership behavior and the development of employee engagement. This relationship has implications for approaching the concept of leadership development for organizations looking to develop higher levels of employee engagement. As alluded to earlier, there are some assumptions to be noted prior to discussing implications. For example, our framework assumes that leadership is a process, not an object or set of characteristics, and is by our definition, something everyone has access to. Second, we propose that leaders and employees are more context-bound and have more sophisticated behavioral ranges than might be overtly conveyed by the limitations of our writing. We do not mean to corner engagement as an "all or nothing" phenomenon; certainly there are degrees of engagement. The subtle nuances and fragileness of the leader–follower relationship and the resilience of an engaged employee must be taken into account and are, in some ways, assumptions we hold about how behavior operates in an organizational context; these areas remain open for further exploration and research and we are confident that our assumptions could be challenged. We understand that not everyone holds the same assumptions and we do not espouse agreement or adoption of our assumptions. Notwithstanding, the following section details implications for leaders to consider in this new context.

First, from our perspective, leadership starts with the self. Leaders who are looking to build engaging climates should be encouraged to develop in the four domains of emotional intelligence, especially the domain of self-awareness. As the foundational domain for which the other three are developed, self-awareness is the conceptual cornerstone of emotional intelligence and in many ways of leadership that promotes the development of engagement. We engage with leaders who validate and respect us and who take our ideas, and therefore ourselves, seriously (Kahn, 2010); but leaders must

first validate and respect their own ideas and take their own perspectives and contexts into account. Leaders must understand that what they say and how they act affects those around them and their ability, and/or willingness, to perform.

For leaders who have never been tasked with serious self-reflection, this may be an uncomfortable skill to develop. Much like in the development of employee engagement, care should be taken to ensure that professionals who train the domains of emotional intelligence create environments that are safe, meaningful, and available in the ways that Kahn (1990) conceptualizes these areas; vulnerability and learning cannot survive in climates of criticism (Kahn, 2010), even when such criticism may be self-imposed. Self-management is another important area for leaders to develop, especially as they role model for their followers. Great leaders need other great leaders from which to learn (Wagner & Harter, 2006). Executive coaching is one tool or process that can be used to develop a leader's self-awareness and self-management skills (Bono, Purvanova, Towler, & Peterson, 2009; Kilburg, 1997).

Second, from our vantage, leadership starts with the basics. Thus leaders must pay close attention to their followers' needs on a basic level and be willing to respond appropriately. While this is a delicate balance, Harter and colleagues (2002) provide a framework in which to begin this process. Using their framework, Harter et al. (2002) suggest that leaders must communicate with employees at a baseline level, clearly sharing role-related expectations, providing developmental feedback, and explaining how they fit into the larger organizational fabric. Employees engage fully when they believe they are involved in meaningful work and know there is a place of shelter should something go awry (Fairle, 2011; 2010); this is dependent on levels of communication between leader and follower. Here, clear communication provides boundaries as well as support for growth and includes specifics such as timelines and deadlines, appropriate coaching, and guidance, and also a sense of direction and contribution. Clear, shared communication assists followers in being collaborators, rather than cooperators in the process of creating work (Shuck & Rocco, 2011). Moreover, Amabile and Kramer (2011) suggest that leaders should learn how to better articulate meaning in work and to help solve daily hassles that bog some followers down. It seems that large strides are needed in this area alone.

In addition to Harter et al's (2002) model, Herzberg's (1968) framework gives emphasis to the importance of holistic human resource development and management within organizations in this very context. Clear expectations, resources, fair pay, and reasonable working conditions serve to negate job dissatisfaction and are the foundational conditions for engagement to begin development. Meeting these requirements, however, is only the beginning. To progress beyond the foundational conditions for employee engagement, leaders must move beyond transactional leadership to transformational leadership. Training initiatives directed at developing leaders' transformational leadership skills have been shown to be successful at increasing followers' motivation, commitment, and performance levels (Barling, Weber, & Kelloway, 1996; Dvir, Eden, Avolio, & Shamir, 2002). Such transformational leadership training initiatives warrant further consideration in terms of their empirical impact on employee engagement.

Most critical for the development of employee engagement, leadership must be viewed as an invitational and collaborative process, not an autocratic act. Leadership in this context assumes a two-way dyadic relation in creating the space for leadership to occur and the opportunity for engagement to develop; as the leader meets the needs of their followers, followers meet the needs of their leader in symbiotic ways (Hollander, 1978). This perspective of leadership/followership shows the dynamics of leadership development and highlights the robust nature of the subject, especially in the context of developing employee engagement. High engagement behavior emerges when leaders influence environmental factors conducive for engagement to develop. As a component of the process in developing engagement, Kahn's (1990) domains have significant implications for both leader and follower development.

For example, consider the impact of operationalizing the conditions of meaningfulness, safety, and availability within leadership development programs. Environments for developing leadership focused on the emergence of engagement must be intentionally created, not demanded. Engagement is a state freely offered by the employee based on their interpretation of the work context. Moreover, highlighting the complexity of this topic, each environment is different, often grounded in the unique needs of the follower and situation (Hughes, Ginnett, & Curphy, 2009).

Ultimately, billions of dollars are spent each year on training leadership skills and behaviors. It seems prudent that those developing leaders as well as leaders themselves would seek a model that has the power to significantly impact retention, productivity, loyalty, customer satisfaction, company reputation, and overall stakeholder value (Lockwood, 2007; Wagner & Harter, 2006). The use of emotional intelligence as a basis for developing engagement-focused leaders is in many ways continually evolving in the field of leadership development. This view and its model provide a pragmatic way to cultivate leadership skills developmentally, from a research-based and conceptually sound foundation that helps leaders lead in a new and ever-changing landscape.

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